

HABITATS OF BOUGAINVILLE COLEOPTERA I

After spending over a year on Bougainville and collecting beetles part of the time, some interesting facts on distribution and habitats have become evident.

The outstanding distributional fact is the strange relationship between the many islands in the vicinity of the Solomons. I have seen material from Guadalcanal, Bougainville and New Georgia and in seeing these series, one thing is evident - that is the faunal homogeneity of the Solomons - except for New Georgia which has apparently deviated and developed independent lines. This is strange for New Georgia is almost exactly between Guadalcanal and Bougainville, yet the beetles are distinctly different. I imagine some good series and analytical work will show an explanation. (See Mayr, Systematics and the Origin of Species, p. 82, 1944.)

The number of beetles that may be collected on Bougainville in a few hours is fantastic, and one who collects Cerambycids will really find them in abundance. They outnumber any other group of beetles practically two to one - at least in the jungle areas. The Prioninae are the only ones which will come consistently to light. As a matter of fact, in over ten years collecting in the states and the tropics, I have only taken two Prionids in the field; all the others were at light.

The other Cerambycids are very common. Practically every bush and plant has a few. If one desires series of five hundred or more specimens in a few minutes, collect from a dead branch with very little undergrowth around it. Often they will be sitting there - crowded head to tail and even two deep. There is also a brown Elaterid beetle about an inch and one-half long which likes the same kind of branch, but which is easy to pass up for it looks more like dead wood than the branch.

The genus Batocera, the heavyweight of the Lamiinae, is easy to find. Walk through the jungle and watch the top foliage of fig trees

and rattan palms. Batocera feeds on these trees and has a tendency to stick to one small area. Unless one of these spots is found one probably will never collect any. Though occasionally they come to light. But once an area is found it can be collected week after week and it is easy to knock down fifty specimens in a few days.

Curculionidae and Scarabaeidae are the next most common. Scarabs will come to light, but the big majority are diurnal and fly from flower to flower. Weevils are widely distributed, but they are not as numerous as the Cerambycids. More searching is necessary to find them. Rhyncophorus seems to like fresh tree stumps, while the rest can be found almost anywhere. Many weevils travel in pairs and if one specimen is found, the opposite sex can often be located just a few inches away.

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